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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1884

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

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RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001003

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2027

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SUBJECT: TURKEY'S PRESIDENTIAL VOTE: OPPOSITION DEMANDS

COURT RULING

REF: ANKARA 979 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, for Reasons 1.4 (b  
,d)

**¶1.** (U) Turkey's Constitutional Court will now decide the course of the country's presidential election. A total of 361 MPs voted in the April 27 first round, with 357 votes going to ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) candidate Abdullah Gul. The total number of votes cast fell six short of the 367 required to elect a president in the first round. Opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) maintains that 367 MPs are required for a quorum. CHP will now petition the Constitutional Court to declare the session invalid.

**¶2.** (U) In addition to CHP, center-right True Path (DYP) and Motherland (ANAVATAN) decided to boycott the session. A total of five independents, two DYPers, one ANAVATAN and one CHPer participated.

**¶3.** (U) In a second, separate controversy, Speaker Arinc counted as present for purposes of a quorum every MP who entered the room during the course of session, warning them and calling out their names to be recorded in the official parliamentary record. His final count came to 368. CHP may protest this as well.

**¶4.** (U) The second round of voting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 2. If the Constitutional Court rules in CHP's favor, however, parliament will be dissolved and the country will move to early general elections.

**¶5.** (SBU) In last-minute maneuvering, PM Erdogan held a noon press conference, hammering on the importance of participatory democracy, branding CHP leader Baykal as an autocrat and invoking the name of Ataturk. In the rug shop mentality preceding the vote, AKP reportedly negotiated with ANAVATAN on election list positions and a 10th constitutional reform package, to no avail.

**¶6.** (C) COMMENT. Only a few opposition MPs had the courage to break party discipline and show up for the vote. The opposition's concept of democracy remains a negative one: tear down and boycott, rather than participate. CHP remains determined to derail an AKP presidential candidacy at all costs. All opposition parties today -- CHP, DYP and ANAVATAN -- abdicated their democratic responsibility, shifting it to

the Constitutional Court. It is a move intended to discredit the process and AKP. However the Court decides, its decision will be labeled as political. All parties' behavior once a decision is rendered will be a key indicator of the health of Turkish democracy.

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